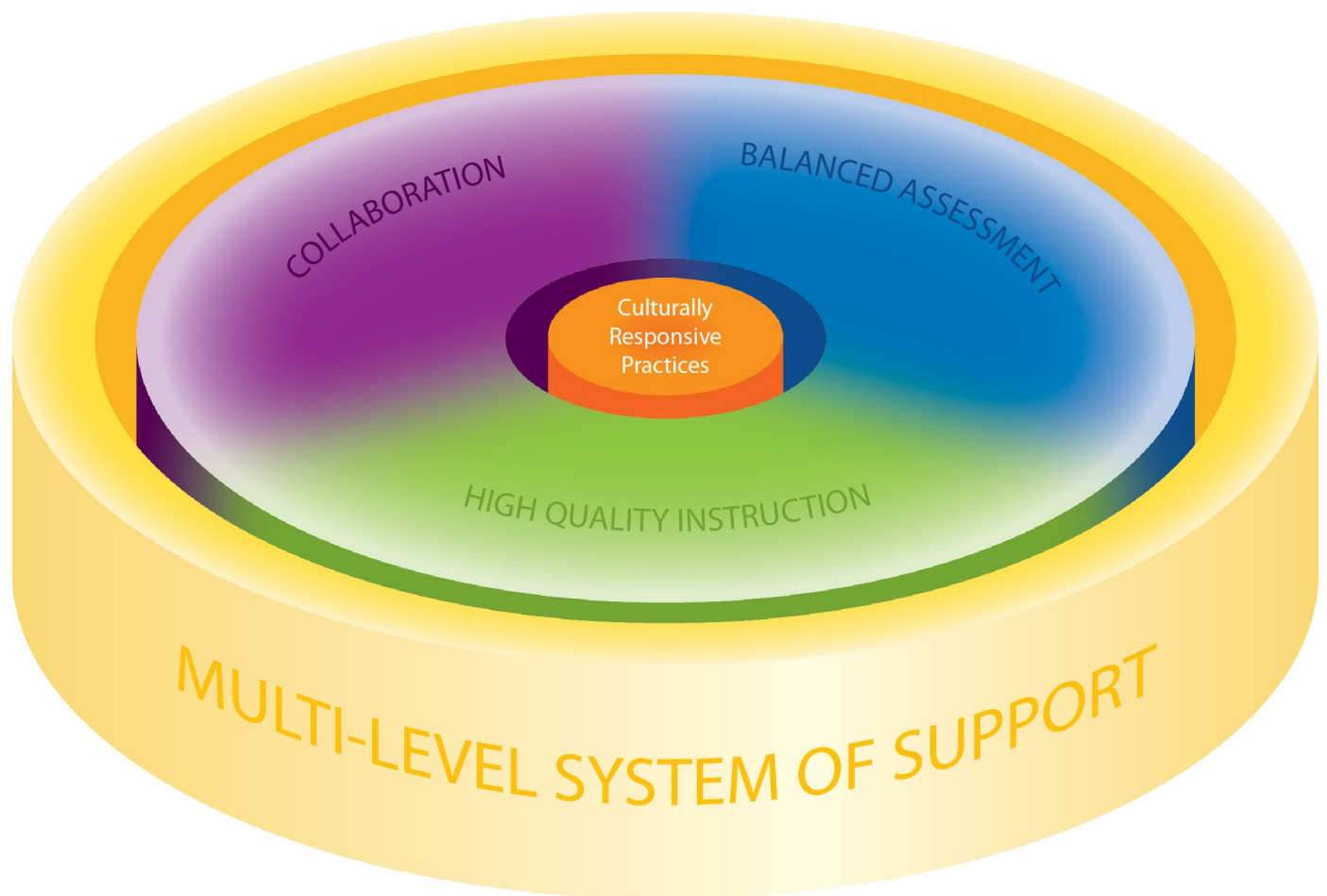


# Wisconsin Response to Intervention: A Guiding Document



November 15, 2010

Dear Educator:

Wisconsin's long-standing commitment to public education continues to earn nation-leading graduation rates, college entrance exam scores, and a growing number of students taking rigorous college-level courses. We have a tradition of excellence, and there is much to celebrate. At the same time, we cannot afford to rest on our laurels.

We must ensure that Wisconsin's vision of excellence, achievement, and readiness is accessible to every student. Data reveals significant opportunity gaps between students of color and white students, and a static overall achievement rate persists. To address these issues, I have identified Response to Intervention (RtI) as a process that will help Wisconsin move toward my vision of every child a graduate.

RtI is a way to systematize high quality instruction, balanced assessment systems, and collaboration. It is this systematic process that will ensure that all students have equal access to supports that will ensure their long-term success. RtI will create collaborative systems among educators; assist in using data to make informed decisions about students, staff, and resources; and provide a framework for seeking success for all students. RtI will offer a process to examine gaps in opportunity and learning and assist in building systems so that every child is a graduate.

Emergent research suggests that RtI is effective for helping to improve academics and behavior among students. To support high quality learning, the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESAs) have partnered to create the Wisconsin RtI Center, a state-wide resource network that will provide educators with the knowledge and expertise to implement this important process.

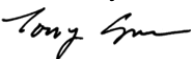
Wisconsin is making other significant changes that will assist in supporting a comprehensive and unified state-level vision for RtI, including:

- adopting the Common Core State Standards for English language arts and mathematics that are rigorous, clear, and aligned for college and career readiness;
- phasing out the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examinations in favor of assessments that provide targeted and timely information to educators, students, and their parents; and
- supporting the Culturally Responsive Training for All: Training and Enhancement network, a consortium of Wisconsin schools and districts focused on culturally responsive practices.

These initiatives are not separate of RtI; they are integrated in my vision of a high quality RtI system.

All children have a right to a public education that charts a path to success. All children deserve highly qualified teachers in their classrooms and equal access to the best instructional materials, strategies, and interventions available. I believe RtI will help Wisconsin enhance this equity of access and ensure that every child is a graduate, prepared for further education and the workforce. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to all learners in Wisconsin.

Sincerely,



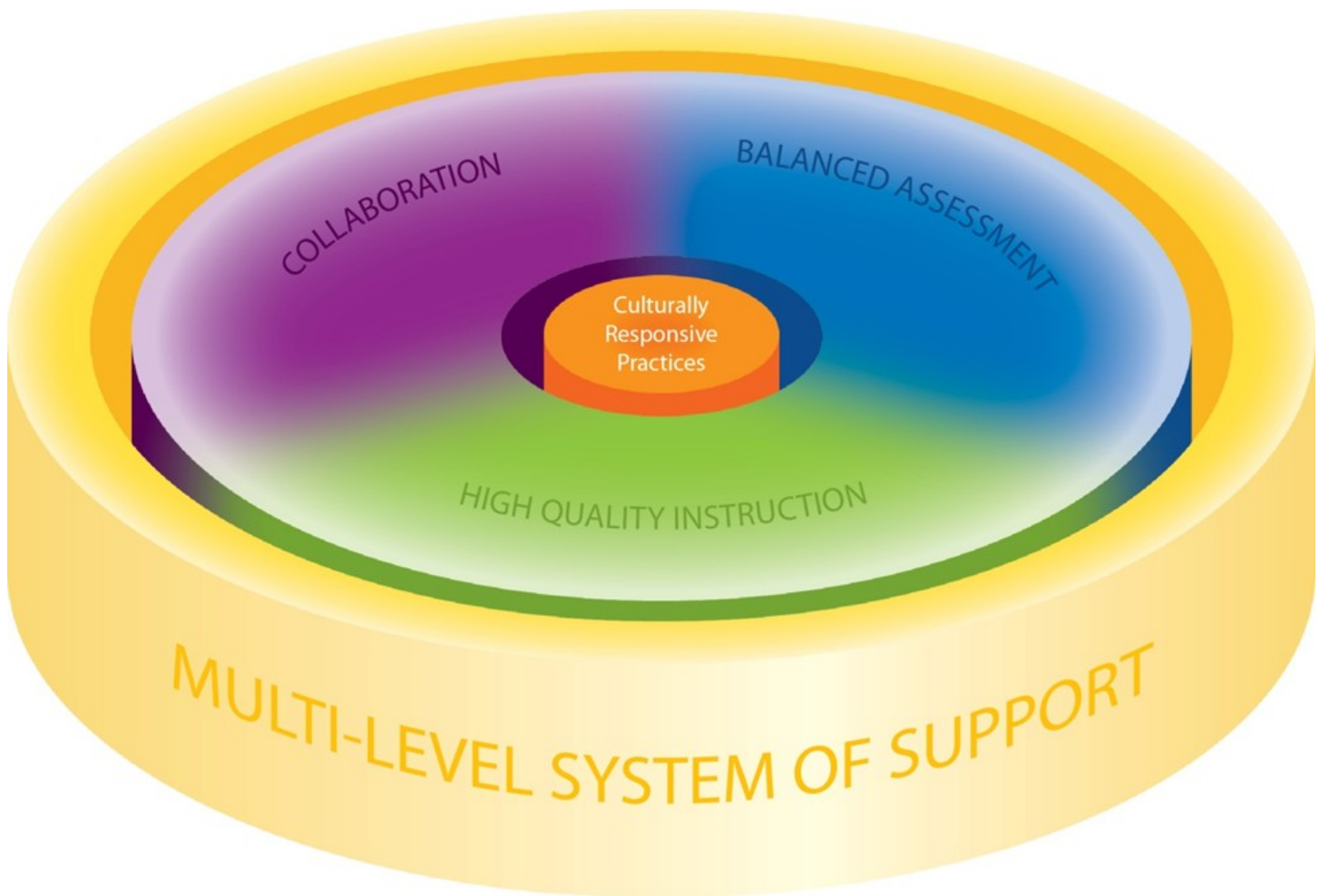
Tony Evers, PhD  
State Superintendent



## Purpose of this Document

To assist Wisconsin education leaders with planning for **Response to Intervention (RtI)**, DPI, in partnership with Wisconsin education stakeholders, has developed this informational brief. This brief is intended to provide guidance for implementation of RtI and should not be read as administrative rule. This brief provides Wisconsin's vision for RtI, shares a definition and an accompanying visual model for RtI, reviews essential elements of RtI, highlights existing state resources for getting started, responds to frequently asked questions, and includes a glossary of terms. Bolded words are defined in the glossary. The information presented in this brief reflects research, evidence-based practice, and high quality pedagogy. For more information on RtI, see [www.dpi.wi.gov/rti/index.html](http://www.dpi.wi.gov/rti/index.html).

## Wisconsin's Vision for Response to Intervention



In Wisconsin's vision for RtI, the three essential elements of high quality instruction, balanced assessment, and collaboration systematically interact within a **multi-level system of support** to provide the structures to increase success for *all* students. **Culturally responsive practices** are central to an effective RtI system and are evident within each of the three essential elements. In a multi-level system of support, schools employ the three essential elements of RtI at varying levels of intensity based upon student responsiveness to instruction and intervention. These elements do not work in isolation. Rather, all components of the visual model inform and are impacted by the others; this relationship forms Wisconsin's vision for RtI.

## ***What Are Culturally Responsive Practices, and Why Are They at the Center of the Graphic?***

Culturally responsive practices account for and adapt to the broad diversity of race, language, and culture in Wisconsin schools and prepare all students for a multicultural world. Within Wisconsin's vision for RtI, culturally responsive practices are evident in and infused throughout all levels of each of the three essential elements.

Nationally, race has been a predictor of success in schools for decades. Called “the achievement gap,” “the opportunity gap,” “the equity gap”—all phrases speak to the long-standing educational inequities in our system. Both national data and Wisconsin state data show that in nearly every measurable area—academic achievement, discipline, gifted and talented placement, and graduation rates—students of color have statistically significant lower rates of success as compared to their white peers.<sup>[1]</sup> To address these gaps in opportunity, Wisconsin has situated culturally responsive practices as central to a RtI system.

Specifically, there are three reasons RtI in Wisconsin is centered on culturally-responsive practices:

First, Wisconsin students are increasingly diverse. Our curriculum, instruction, and supports must reflect this diversity and be intentionally inclusive of the many cultures in our communities.

Second, culturally responsive practices make a difference. In Wisconsin, school districts have changed race-based patterns of success and failure through attention and intention.

Third, RtI is a systems change model, and to implement RtI without continual reflection on who is academically and behaviorally successful (and who is not) will not lead to systems change. It is critical to examine core practices, and to monitor who is successful with and without interventions/additional challenges, and which interventions/additional challenges are more successful with various cultural, racial, and ethnic groups.



<sup>[1]</sup> Readers interested in further reading or research on the persistent nature of the achievement gap <http://www.agi.harvard.edu/>

## A Note on the Rtl Triangle



Rtl is often represented visually by a triangle separated into three tiers that depict levels of intensity based on student need. Due to the widespread prevalence of this model, many have asked, “Why no triangle in Wisconsin?”

While many districts may choose to use a three-tiered system to organize their Rtl system, the way a district chooses to structure their Rtl system is a local control decision left to individual districts.

Districts have varying resources, programs, and practices that will likely influence the building of their unique Rtl system. Districts may use tiers or find that other multi-level systems or processes work well in their district. The Wisconsin visual model outlines the parameters of a high quality Rtl system while maintaining the flexibility that districts require to build systems to meet local needs.

In Wisconsin, culturally responsive practices are central to the state’s Rtl vision and infused throughout the three essential elements. The central role of culturally responsive practices in Rtl is graphically depicted in the state visual. Additionally, the circular model is a Rtl systems level view of the process, while the triangle depicts a student level view. Districts may find that a triangle or other visual representation best fits their vision for meeting the needs of their distinct populations and that many Rtl models fit within the state’s visual model and definition.



## Defining Rtl

In Wisconsin, Response to Intervention (Rtl) is defined as a process for achieving higher levels of academic and behavioral success for all students. Rigorous implementation of Rtl includes a combination of high quality instructional practice, balanced assessment, and collaboration, all of which are infused with culturally responsive practices. Further, Rtl systems use a multi-level system of support to identify and respond to student need. Implementation of a multi-level system of support includes meaningful family involvement, **data-based decision making**, and effective leadership. Comprehensive Rtl implementation will contribute to increased instructional quality, equitable access to high quality and effective programming, and will assist with the identification and support of learners with varied abilities and needs. The [Wisconsin Rtl Roadmap](#) (page 8) illustrates how the three essential elements function within an enacted Rtl system and how the system adjusts to meet the needs of students.

This document will further expand on the three essential elements of Rtl and illustrate their connect- edness to culturally responsive practices. The three essential elements are:

- High Quality Instruction
- Balanced Assessment
- Collaboration.

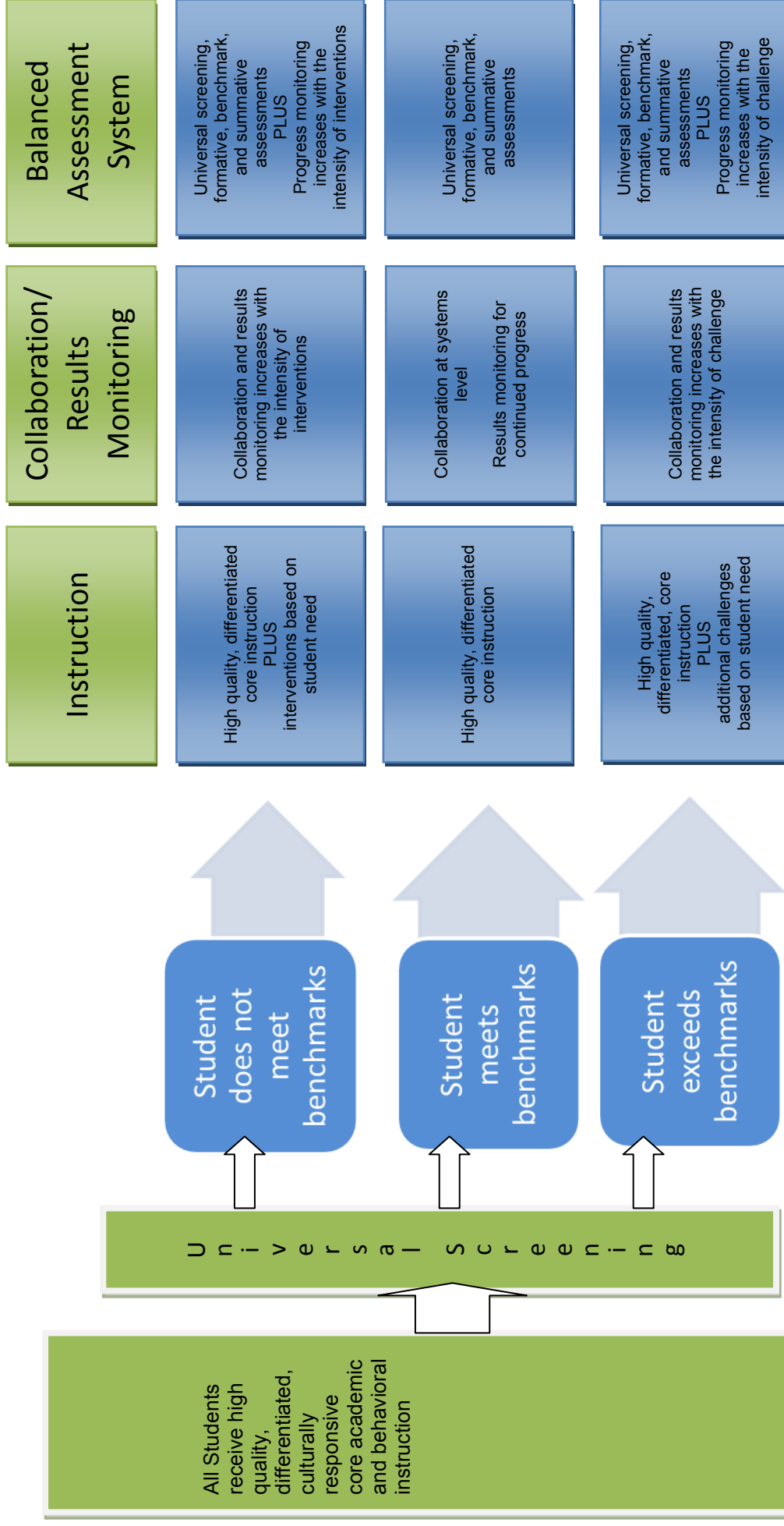
### *What is Unique about Rtl in Wisconsin?*

Wisconsin's vision for Rtl addresses both academics and behavior, employs culturally responsive practices within each of the three essential elements, and uses a strengths-based model to system- atically provide ALL students with the supports they need to succeed. Wisconsin stakeholders have developed the following guiding principles that provide the philosophical underpinning to Rtl and al- so serve as a reflective checkpoint to assess an enacted system:

- Rtl is for ALL children and ALL educators
- Rtl must support and provide value to effective practices
- Success for Rtl lies within the classroom through collaboration
- Rtl applies to both academics and behavior
- Rtl supports and provides value to the use of multiple assessments to inform instructional prac- tices
- Rtl is something you do and not necessarily something you buy
- Rtl emerges from and supports research and evidence-based practice.



# Wisconsin Response to Intervention Roadmap: A Model for Academic and Behavioral Success for All Students Using Culturally Responsive Practices



The Wisconsin RtI Roadmap (<http://dpi.wi.gov/rti/pdf/rti-roadmap.pdf>) illustrates how the three essential elements function within an enacted RtI system and how the system adjusts to meet the needs of students.



## High Quality Instruction

High quality instruction (curriculum, instruction, and assessment) is engaging, standards-based, data-driven, and research-based. Curriculum, instruction, and assessment that are grounded in the culturally responsive practices of relevance, identity, belonging, and community will serve to best engage all students. High quality curriculum and instruction should be culturally appropriate for the students being served and prepare all students for a multicultural world.



All students should receive high quality, culturally responsive core academic and behavioral instruction that is **differentiated** for student need and aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for mathematics and English language arts and other state and local standards. Standards assist in providing consistent grade-level benchmarks. **Core instruction** refers to the curriculum, instruction, and assessment that all students receive. Core curriculum stems from and is directly shaped by the standards, the district curricular framework, and the effective use of formative, summative, and benchmark assessments. All curriculum and instructional practices should be examined against their evidence base and the educational context within which they will be implemented.

### *Intervention and additional challenge: Providing high quality instruction by responding to student need*

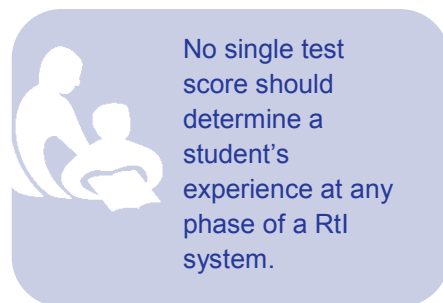
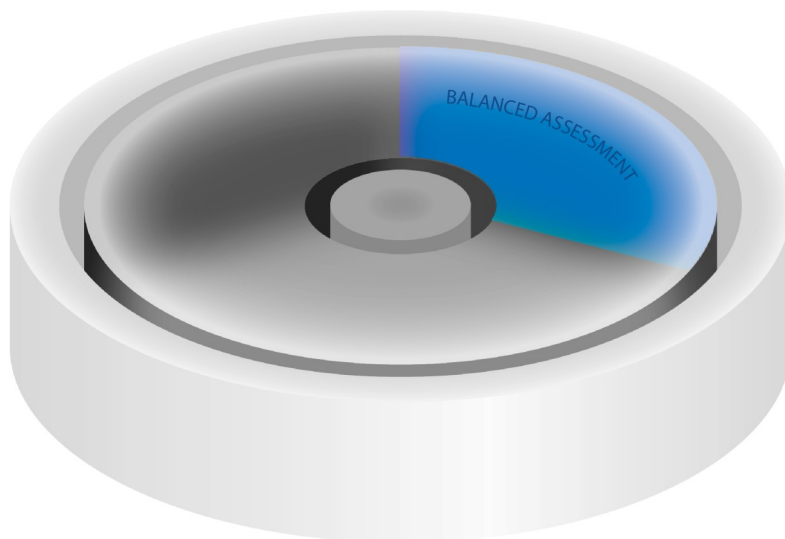
**Interventions** are intended to increase student performance in the general curriculum for students who are not meeting benchmarks in a particular curricular area. **Additional challenges** are intended to meet the needs of students who are exceeding benchmarks. For students whose screening data indicate they are either likely to not meet benchmarks or are likely to exceed benchmarks in a particular instructional area, educators use data in a collaborative process to determine appropriate interventions or additional challenges, which are matched to a student's particular area of need. Within this process, the intensity of intervention or additional challenge is also determined. Students continue to access core curriculum, instruction, and assessment in addition to these small group or individual interventions or additional challenges. In certain cases when students exceed benchmarks, a collaborative team may determine that an additional challenge may most appropriately take place in lieu of core instruction.




The process of identifying and using interventions and additional challenges is flexible and fluid. The intensity and nature of the interventions or additional challenges should be adjusted based on a student's responsiveness as evidenced by multiple data sources. Instructional time, frequency of instructional sessions, size of the instructional group, level of instruction, instructional technique, and instructional provider are examples of adjustments that can be made to respond to student need. Interventions and additional challenges, as components of high-quality instruction, should each be culturally responsive and appropriate for the students being served.

## ***Balanced Assessment System for Continuous Review of Student Progress***

Continuous review of student progress within a RtI system involves a balanced, systematic process of constant inquiry that uses multiple measures to determine the current skill level of a student or group of students, how students are responding to core curriculum and instruction, and how students are responding to interventions or additional challenges. No single test score should determine a student's experience at any phase of a RtI system. Rather, multiple types of data should be gathered, and their evidence should be considered. Educator and family input should also be sought in making decisions about the kinds of data collected (e.g. teacher observation, family interview, benchmark assessment scores, student self assessment) and should be considered as part of understanding the whole picture of a student's performance. In seeking broad experience and expertise in choosing and implementing assessment procedures, schools will be better equipped to enact culturally responsive practices that reflect the identity, community, sense of belonging, and relevance of the group of students and families served. Within a RtI system, universal screening and progress monitoring play a critical role in determining how best to respond to student need.



**Universal screening** is a process in which data from multiple measures are analyzed to determine whether each student is likely to meet, exceed, or not meet benchmarks and can be constructed for both academic and behavioral purposes. A screener is an assessment given as one part of the



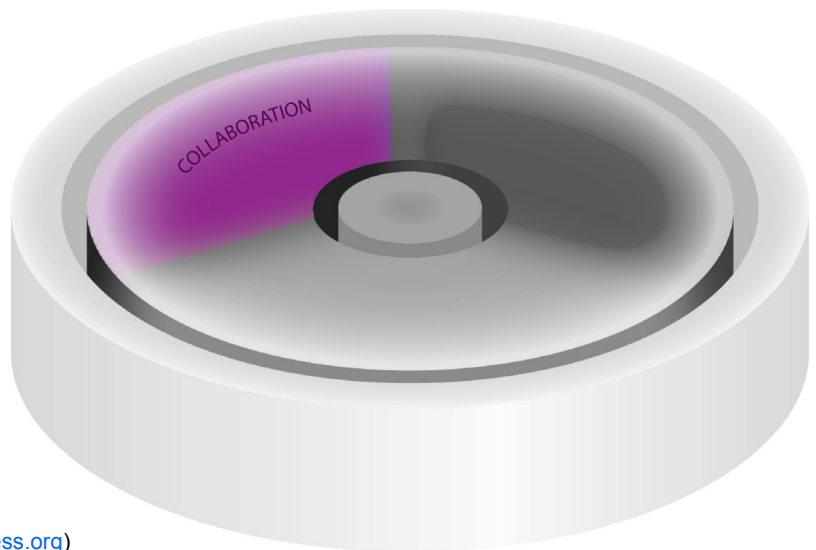
screening process to establish a baseline from which students are beginning and to align the instructional starting point to student need. Screeners are typically a form of data collection designed to be easy, quick, and repeatable. Again, no single piece of data should determine a student's experience within a RtI system; multiple types of data (survey, interview, teacher observation, etc.) should be collected to assist in a complete universal screening process. Data from the universal screening process are used to make decisions about interventions and additional challenges. It is also important to note that universal screening data can be examined to determine if a change in core curriculum and instruction is needed.

**Progress monitoring** is a process used to assess a student's academic and behavioral performance, to measure student improvement or responsiveness to instruction, and to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction.<sup>[2]</sup> This process is also used to monitor a student's response to specific interventions or additional challenges. Progress monitoring can be formal (quantifiable, norm-referenced tools) or informal (teacher-developed formative tools) and can be implemented with individual students or an entire class. The frequency of progress monitoring will increase with the intensity of an intervention or additional challenge. Like universal screening, progress monitoring is a process, and thus data should include multiple pieces of evidence with a focus on individual student improvement as well as small group improvement.

RtI is a system for increased success for *all* students, and universal screening and progress monitoring are central to this system. RtI may also be used as a method for identifying students with **specific learning disabilities (SLD)**. As a student moves further toward a process of a SLD determination, by rule, the criteria of progress monitoring tools becomes more stringent to ensure strict consistency, fidelity, and reliability across the state. Making educational decisions based on multiple types of data is equally important to this process. For more information on the SLD determination process as it relates to a RtI system, see <http://dpi.wi.gov/sped/ld.html>.

## Collaboration

Collaboration is a process where people work together toward common goals. Collaboration as part of a RtI system includes educators, families, and communities working together both formally and informally. This partnership builds and implements a model that identifies and provides supports to students to increase their academic and behavioral success through data-based decision making. Collaborative protocols such as problem-solving processes and profes-



<sup>[2]</sup> National Center on Response to Intervention ([www.rti4success.org](http://www.rti4success.org))

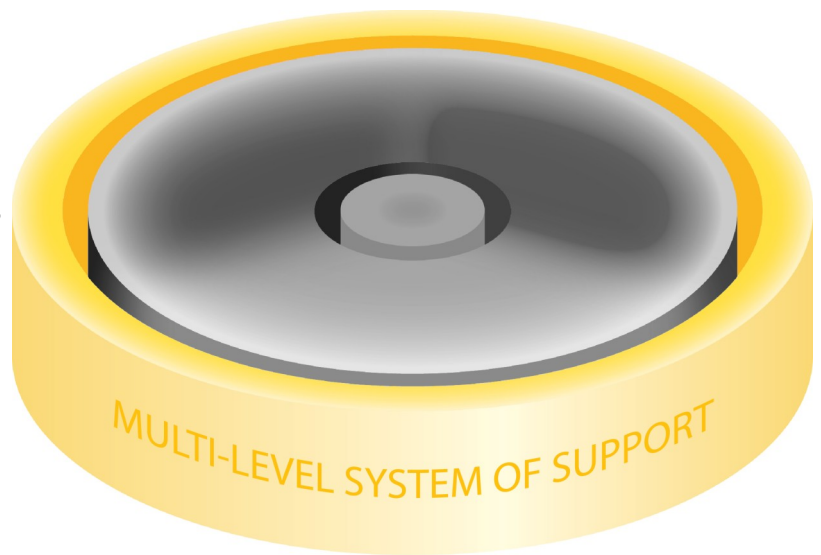
sional learning communities (PLC) can be used to systematize discussions of student, class, grade, school, district, and state-level data. The frequency and intensity of collaborative teaming should increase with the intensity of student need.

Collaboration across subject areas, job titles, and among schools in a district also helps to establish a systemic and systematic approach to student support. Shared discussion around school schedules, course offerings, budget, staffing, and resource allocation can help to support decision making within a Rtl system that maximizes local resources. As with other practices within a Rtl system, all topics, formats, and outcomes should consider how culturally responsive practices such as relevance, identity, community, and sense of belonging impact collaboration.

## ***Multi-level System of Support***

Historically, school reform efforts often emphasized collaboration, high quality instruction, and balanced assessment. Rtl provides a systematic approach that integrates these three essential elements within a multi-level system of support to maximize student achievement. A multi-level system of support is the practice of systematically providing differing levels of intensity of supports (interventions/additional challenges, collaborative structures, monitoring of student progress) based upon student responsiveness to instruction and intervention.

Within a Rtl system schools: use data to identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes or in need of increased challenge, monitor student progress, intervene based on student need, and adjust the intensity and nature of interventions or challenges depending on a student's responsiveness. Factors, such as effective leadership, meaningful family and community involvement, and data-based decision-making, enhance a multi-level system of support.



A multi-level system of support is the practice of systematically providing differing levels of intensity of supports based upon student responsiveness to instruction and intervention.



## Getting Started

### Where does a district or school begin?

To begin, many local decisions must be made to set up systems that are best for the unique population and circumstances of the school and district. DPI encourages local education agencies (LEAs) to meaningfully include educators, families, and community members when making these decisions to ensure that local RtI systems are effective for their specific students. Examples of these decisions include core curriculum and instructional practices, universal screening and progress monitoring tools and processes, collaborative systems, best use of staff and resources to support all students, specific systems of support (e.g. the use of levels/tiers, thresholds for increased supports), etc.

### What are some DPI tools and resources to help a district or school implement RtI?

- **The Wisconsin RtI Self-Assessment Tool** (<http://dpi.wi.gov/rti/pdf/rti-self-assess.pdf>) is intended to assist school or district level teams who wish to discuss and reflect on their readiness to implement a RtI system and to provide ongoing opportunities for open-ended reflection, discussion, and planning.
- **The Wisconsin RtI Roadmap** (<http://dpi.wi.gov/rti/pdf/rti-roadmap.pdf>) provides a visual overview of an enacted Wisconsin RtI system.
- **The Wisconsin RtI Center** ([www.wisconsinrticenter.org](http://www.wisconsinrticenter.org)) is a collaborative project between DPI and the twelve CESAs to provide high quality RtI professional development and technical assistance regionally throughout Wisconsin. The Wisconsin Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) ([www.wisconsinpbisnetwork.com](http://www.wisconsinpbisnetwork.com)) Network operates within the RtI Center.
- **Culturally Responsive Education for All: Training and Enhancement (CREATE)** ([www.createwisconsin.net](http://www.createwisconsin.net)) is a DPI funded statewide project to provide supports to districts with the goal of transforming schools and unlocking the potential of all students.
- **Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics** ([www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org)) are the newly adopted (June, 2010) Wisconsin English and mathematics standards.
- **Advancing Student Learning Through Distributed Instructional Leadership: A Toolkit for High School Leadership Teams** ([http://dpi.wi.gov/sprntdnt/pdf/distributed\\_leadership\\_toolkit.pdf](http://dpi.wi.gov/sprntdnt/pdf/distributed_leadership_toolkit.pdf)) will support school leaders in building and advancing the promising practice of leadership for learning teams.





## **How will DPI support districts implementing RtI?**

DPI has created web-based tools to help districts build and implement their RtI systems. For more information see [www.dpi.wi.gov/rti/index.html](http://www.dpi.wi.gov/rti/index.html). In addition, DPI has partnered with the twelve CESAs to create the Wisconsin RtI Center to coordinate statewide efforts between the CESAs and professional organizations and to support schools and districts implementing RtI. Visit the Wisconsin RtI Center website at [www.wisconsinrticenter.org](http://www.wisconsinrticenter.org) for information on resources, tools, and professional learning.

## **What is DPI's guidance on assessment tools used as part of a RtI system?**

DPI does not advocate for any specific assessment in a RtI system, nor does the department have a policy that would specify certain assessment tools that a district must use in a RtI process. These are local decisions to be discussed with local education stakeholders. Within a RtI process, DPI encourages educators to use a balanced assessment system. This balanced assessment system would include benchmark, formative, and summative assessments. For more information on balanced assessment see ([www.dpi.wi.gov/oea/nbasp.html](http://www.dpi.wi.gov/oea/nbasp.html)).


As a particular student moves closer to a specific learning disability (SLD) determination process, certain other requirements for assessments may apply. For more information on using RtI processes for SLD determination, see <http://dpi.wi.gov/sped/ld.html>.

## **What is the connection between RtI and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)?**

PBIS is one national model for implementing RtI to address behavior. It is a positive, school-wide, systematic approach based on a proactive RtI model. For more information on PBIS, visit the Wisconsin PBIS Network at [www.wisconsinpbisnetwork.org](http://www.wisconsinpbisnetwork.org).

## **How does a RtI system benefit English Language Learner (ELL) students, and what are the special considerations?**

A RtI system takes into account students' English language proficiency, academic proficiency, previous educational experiences, and cultural background. Given the unique characteristic of ELL



students, a Rtl system responds to the students' educational needs and offers an enhanced platform for learning. The systematic approach to Rtl provides the necessary structures to give all students the opportunity to learn the content through standards-based instruction and assessment and the equitable opportunity to reach mastery of such content.

**How does a Rtl system benefit students with disabilities, and what are the special considerations?**

Rtl offers a systematic way of providing a comprehensive picture of student needs to make instructional decisions to respond to those needs. The systematic approach to Rtl provides the necessary structures to give all students the opportunity to learn the content through standards-based instruction and assessment and the equitable opportunity to reach mastery of such content. For students with disabilities, their Individualized Education Program (IEP) drives programming based on the student's disability related needs. For information on using a Rtl model for identifying students with specific learning disabilities (SLD), see <http://dpi.wi.gov/sped/ld.html>.

**How does a Rtl system benefit students who are exceeding benchmarks, and what are the special considerations?**

A Rtl system can be successfully used to identify the needs of and provide appropriate programming for students with gifts and talents, as required by State Statute. Since Rtl is a school-wide initiative (i.e. systemic), it is an effective way to provide systematic and continuous services beyond the core curriculum for high-ability students. A Rtl system uses balanced assessment to provide a comprehensive picture of student needs in order to make instructional decisions to respond to those needs. Progress monitoring ensures that these learning opportunities are appropriate and result in student growth. For additional information on gifted and talented education, please refer to the *Gifted and Talented Resource Guide* published by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction at <http://dpi.wi.gov/cal/pdf/gtguide.pdf>.





## Glossary

### **Additional challenges**

Additional challenges are research-based strategies that are systematically used with a student or group of students whose screening data indicate that they are likely to exceed benchmarks.

The intensity of the challenge is matched to the intensity of student need and can be adjusted through many dimensions including length, frequency, and duration of implementation.

### **Core instruction**

Core instruction refers to the curriculum, instruction, and assessment that all students receive.

### **Culturally responsive practices**

Culturally responsive practices account for and adapt to the broad diversity of race, language, and culture in Wisconsin schools and prepare all students for a multicultural world. Within Wisconsin's vision for RtI, culturally responsive practices are evident in and infused throughout all levels of each of the three essential elements.

### **Data-based decision making**

Data-based decision making is the process of making instructional decisions for student success (both academically and behavioral) through ongoing collection and analysis of data.

### **Differentiated instruction**

Differentiated instruction is culturally and linguistically appropriate and reflects a dynamic adjustment to student needs such as readiness, interest, or learning style.

### **Intervention**


Academic or behavioral interventions are research-based strategies that are systematically used with a student or group of students whose screening data indicate that they are likely to not meet benchmarks. The intensity of interventions is matched to the intensity of student need and can be adjusted through many dimensions including length, frequency, and duration of implementation.

### **Multi-level system of support**

The practice of systematically providing differing levels of intensity of supports (interventions/ additional challenges, collaborative structures, monitoring of student progress) based upon student responsiveness to instruction and intervention.

### **Progress monitoring**

Progress monitoring is a process used to assess students' academic and behavioral performance, to measure student improvement or responsiveness to instruction, and to evaluate the effective-



ness of instruction. The frequency of progress monitoring increases with the intensity of an intervention or additional challenge.

### **Response to Intervention (Rtl)**

Rtl is a process for achieving higher levels of academic and behavioral success for all students. The three essential elements of high quality instruction, balanced assessment, and collaboration systematically interact within a multi-level system of support to provide the structures to increase success for all students. Culturally responsive practices are central to an effective Rtl system and are evident within each of the three essential elements. In a multi-level system of support, schools employ the three essential elements of Rtl at varying levels of intensity based upon student responsiveness to instruction and intervention.

### **Screening**

See **Universal Screening**.

### **Specific Learning Disability (SLD)**

Sec. 300.8(c)(10) Specific learning disability. (i) General. Specific learning disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.

For information on using a Rtl model for identifying students with a specific learning disability (SLD), see <http://dpi.wi.gov/sped/ld.html>.

### **Universal screening**

Universal screening is a process through which data from multiple measures is accurately analyzed to determine whether each student is likely to meet, exceed, or not meet benchmarks and can be constructed for both academic and behavioral purposes.